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ON PAGE 4

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Ex-CIA head said Castro was no communist

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WASHINGTON — A few weeks after Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959, CIA chief Allen Dulles told the Senate in a secret briefing the Cuban leader did not have "any communist leanings," according to a report released yesterday.

"He has certainly shown great courage," Dulles said of Castro be-

fore the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Jan. 26, 1959. The committee yesterday released a 900-page declassified report on hearings held in 1959.

"We do not think that Castro himself has any communist leanings," Dulles told the panel 25 days after Castro overthrew dictator Fulgencio Batista. "We do not be-

lieve Castro is in the pay of or working for the communists."

"We believe, however, that this is a situation on which the communists could capitalize if there is not a move to get control of the situation more fully than Castro has control of it now."

"American intervention there at this time, or even before, would

have had a disastrous effect throughout the whole hemisphere and I see no alternative — that is a matter of policy," he told the committee.

Dulles was less generous about Castro's brother, Raul, now Cuba's defense minister, and about Argentina-born revolutionary Ernesto (Che) Guevara, the head of Castro's agrarian reform program who was killed in Bolivia in 1967.

"His brother is more irresponsible," Dulles said. "This fellow 'Che' Guevara, the Argentinian who has been fighting with him, we are rather suspicious about him." Dulles also was less than complimentary about Batista, who fled Havana for Miami on Jan. 1, 1959. "We felt that Batista was on the losing end of the stick weeks before it came to an end," Dulles said.

"In fact, an effort was made through extradiplomatic means, quietly, to see whether he would not depart, and an effort was made to see if one could put in an interim government that would at least permit negotiations with Castro."

"He stayed on too long, so that was impossible and Castro came in," Dulles said, in talking of a development replayed 20 years later when Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza Debayle did not leave Managua until it was too late.